







A Presentation to the NC 911 Board June 27, 2014

Comments prepared and respectfully submitted by:

Bill Eckler, Chairman

Rutherford County Board of Commissioners

Paula Roach, Finance Officer
Rutherford County

Jeff Buchanan, Chief Deputy *Rutherford County Sheriff's Office*

Tommy Blanton, Fire Chief Town of Rutherfordton

Justin Moore, Training Officer Rutherford County EMS

Comments from Chairman Bill Eckler, Board of County Commissioners Rutherford County

- Rutherford County has a very hilly terrain which means it is very difficult to give county-wide coverage to the first responders dispatched to emergencies.
- 911 funds should be used to provide the needed infrastructure that would give our 911 Center the ability to reach these first responders in a timely manner; however, the use of 911 funds is limited to incoming calls only.
- A Rutherford County citizen needing help can call in to 911 and the equipment to take that call can be funded by 911 funds, but these funds cannot be used to provide equipment to call out in order to provide help to that person.
- These responders must be able to hear calls so they can receive instructions on where to go and information about the emergency. They also need to be able to communicate once they arrive on the scene. Presently, considerable gaps in coverage exist, and as a result, communication efforts are interrupted.
- Rutherford County is requesting the authority to use 911 funds to provide equipment for both incoming and outgoing calls because both are needed in emergencies that we face every day.
- Rutherford County is represented here today by folks from our Sheriff's Department, our Finance Department, our Emergency Services Department, and Fire Services.

NC 911 Board

On behalf of Rutherford County, I would like to express our appreciation to the Board for approval of the carryforward request earlier this Spring. We would also like to thank the E911 Staff who guided us through this process to make sure the Board had all the information needed for reconsideration at the May meeting. If we had not been able to carryforward funding, our FY15 distribution would have dropped almost \$90,000 and would have significantly impacted our five year capital plan.

Earlier this week, we were able to switch over to our new generator. Due to the timing and other external factors a process we started last June was finally complete a year later. Based upon the calculation as defined by G.S. 62A-46(b)(1), Rutherford County is limited to a fund balance carryforward of about \$85,000. The majority of our excess fund balance creating the scheduled reduction of funds was this generator. Depending on timing of the capital expenditures and our five year plan, we may potentially be affected by this limitation once again. Limiting fund balance to the 20% hinders our ability to save for items such as voice over ip, server upgrades or other expensive items that are needed but do not quite fit the parameters of the E911 grant process.

On behalf of Rutherford and other Counties who may have been impacted by this limitation, I would like to request that a section be added to the annual report noting any carryforward items so they may be taken into consideration prior to the E911 Board staff completing the distribution calculations.

Sincerely,

Paula Roach, Finance Officer Rutherford County NC 911 Board,

The Rutherford County Sheriff's Office respectfully requests the 911 Board consider changing the requirements regarding how 911 usage funds may be used. As we understand, currently, these funds are only permissible for use on incoming calls received at 911 Centers. As a result of mandated changes, our 911 Center is experiencing increased difficulty when dispatching calls to first responders. Dispatched calls are not being reliably received by the first responders' equipment, such as radios and Mobile Data Terminals. These mandates are beyond our control. One example was the requirement by the FCC for all VHF users to become compliant with narrow banding (with no funding). This has reduced our coverage ability to communicate by radio with our first responders. Not only does this sometimes delay response to a call, but it also jeopardizes the safety of all first responders.

Another example is the State's Viper program. This program is leaving Rutherford County, and many other counties, behind because there is no funding for counties to obtain the necessary equipment to fully utilize Viper in dispatching calls.

On behalf of Sheriff Chris Francis and all first responders, we ask that you give great consideration in changing your mandated requirements for funding use, and consider funding equipment required in dispatching these calls to our first responders in an efficient and timely manner so that we all may become better at protecting and serving our citizens.

Sincerely, Jeff Buchanan, Chief Deputy Rutherford County Sheriff's Office Rutherfordton, N.C. 28139

Comments from Chief Tommy Blanton, Rutherfordton Fire Department Town of Rutherfordton

- Currently, no 911 funds can be spent past the 911 call. It would be nice to utilize the funds for equipment to enhance communication capabilities past the initial call. (example radio equipment within the communication center)
- Along the same lines, having open funds to help build better capabilities, one within certain disciplines like the fire service, and, two, to help with better capabilities among the various emergency services disciplines. The term interoperability is used a lot now and these funds would be an asset to increase interoperability capabilities.
- We have been working for about three years now to enhance our ability to switch to 800 MHz for better coverage and communication for the fire service. However, we still will rely somewhat on VHF for paging our firefighters to incidents since no radio manufacturer makes a paging system capable of using 800 MHz frequencies. Freeing these funds for expanded uses would help to purchase the bridge equipment to simulcast over both VHF and 800 MHz thus alerting firefighters without unnecessary delays.
- The key safety factor of utilizing these funds is to help with vital equipment so that all first responders have necessary information in a timely and appropriate manner.

Comments from Justin Moore, Training Officer Rutherford County EMS

- Limiting funds only to resources for call intake is only providing support and funding for one piece of a larger puzzle
- When an individual calls 911, the dispatcher intakes the call. The dispatcher then communicates the information to the responding agencies to the radio; within this area multiple aspects of communications are involved. Therefore, 911 funds should be allowed to purchase and maintain all equipment related to the Communication of the emergency to the appropriate responding agency. This includes, but is not limited to, radio networks, main towers and repeaters, mobile and portable radio equipment.
- We must ensure that all pieces of the emergency communications network are properly funded in order to ensure the citizens of the State of North Carolina and Rutherford County quality care throughout the response to their emergencies; related to medical fire or police